

Message Text

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63

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

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USIA-06 /053 W

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R 241750Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7095

INFO AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 5047

E.O. 11652 - GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PINS, ES

SUBJ: PRESIDENT MOLINA CAUTIONS CATHOLIC CHURCH

REF: SAN SALVADOR 4977

1. PRESIDENT MOLINA PRESENTED A 20-MINUTE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE TO THE NATION ON TELEVISION/RADIO EVENING OF DEC 23. INSTEAD OF CONFINING HIS PREPARED REMARKS TO EXPECTED HOLIDAY GREETINGS, PRESIDENT USED OCCASION TO CAUTION NOT SO SUBTLY THOSE WHO TRYING TO USE CATHOLIC CHURCH AS VEHICLE OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE THAT THEY WOULD CONFINED THEIR EFFORTS TO ECCLESIASTICAL MATTERS. OF AM NEWSPAPERS FOLLOWING MORNING, HIGHLY CONSERVATIVE AND TRADITIONAL, "DIARIO DE HOY", HEADLINED SPEECH AS "PRESIDENT MOLINA CONDEMNS A POLITICIZED CHURCH".

2. IN A DIRECT REFERENCE TO THE SALVADORAN CHURCH HIERARCHY'S RECENT DENUNCIATION OF VIOLENCE, ISSUED BY ARCHBISHOP IN CONNECTION WITH THE CLASH OF SECURITY FORCES AND CAMPESINOS AT LA CAYETANA IN LATE NOVEMBER (SEE REFTTEL), MOLINA SAID THAT WHILE HE ACCEPTS THE CHURCH'S "UNEASINESS" WITH VIOLENCE HE ALSO FEELS THAT "NOBODY CAN
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INVOKE HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES, IF THEY DO NOT RESPECT THEM IN

THEIR RELATIONS WITH ALL OTHERS". THE PRESIDENT, REFERRING TO HIS OWN AND HIS REGIME'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE FACT THAT EL SALVADOR HAS MANY SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, AND THEIR DETERMINATION TO WORK FOR JUST SOLUTIONS TO OVERCOME THEM, SAID THAT "AS A POLITICAL LEADER AND HEAD OF THE GOVERNMENT" HE IS COMMITTED TO PROMOTING HUMAN AND SOCIAL RIGHTS OF ALL SALVADORANS AND THAT "NO DEMAGOGIC PROVOCATION FROM ANY POLITICAL GROUP OR SECTOR WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM OUR FIRM AND PERMANENT STRUGGLE" FOR THE DEFENCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS. THE PRESIDENT CONDEMNED THE DEMAGOGIC ATTITUDES OF "INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS THAT, UNDER THE PRETEXT OF SOCIAL INEQUALITIES, TRY TO CONVERT THEMSELVES INTO OCCASIONAL REDEEMERS". MOLINA USED QUOTES FROM POPES TO BUTTRESS HIS ARGUMENT AGAINST A POLITICIZED CHURCH. SIGNIFICANTLY REFERENCES RAN FIVE TO ONE FOR PAUL VI OVER JOHN XXIII. THE THEME OF THOSE PARTS OF SPEECH DEVOTED THIS SUBJECT COULD BE SUMMARIZED AS "THE GOVERNMENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC WELL BEING OF THE NATION, AND PROGRESS ON THESE FRONTS IS ONLY POSSIBLE IN AN ORDERLY SOCIETY. THE CHURCH AND ITS LEADERS BETTER DO NOTHING TO DISTURB THAT ORDERLINESS".

COMMENT: EMBASSY IS SURPRISED THAT PRESIDENT TOOK SUCH IMMEDIATE, AND UNEQUIVOCAL, OPPORTUNITY ISSUE WARNING TO THE CHURCH. SUCH A PUBLICLY AIRED POSTURE CAN ONLY PROVOKE COMMENT, WHEN WE WOULD HAVE THOUGHT GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO REMAIN SILENT AND LET THE ISSUE GO AWAY. WHILE CHURCH HIERARCHY IS UNLIKELY TO RESPOND IN KIND AND WILL IN FACT PROBABLY ACCEPT ADVICE AND WITHDRAW TO ITS TRADITIONAL STANCE OF SILENCE, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE THAT YOUNGER CLERICS WILL REACT IN SIMILAR FASHION. THEY WILL ASSUME THAT THE PRESIDENT'S WORDS WERE SPECIFICALLY DIRECTED AT THEM. EMBOFFS HAVE RECENTLY SPOKEN TO SEVERAL PRIESTS WHO HAVE REPUTATIONS AS RESPONSIBLE SPOKESMEN OF ACTIVIST WING OF CHURCH TO DETERMINE THEIR REACTIONS TO RECENT CHURCH-STATE TENSION. SINCE THEY FOR MOST PART WERE DISAPPOINTED WITH WHAT THEY TOOK FOR "WEAKNESS" AND "COWARDLINESS" OF ARCHBISHOP'S DENUNCIATION OF VIOLENCE, THE VERY SPEECH THAT PROVOKED MOLINA BY ITS BOLDNESS, THEY WOULD MOST LIKELY ONLY BE FURTHER ANTOGONIZED BY PRESIDENT'S WARNING. FULL TEXT IN SPANISH WILL BE POUCHED.

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